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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE KOREAN WAR

The Formative Period

by

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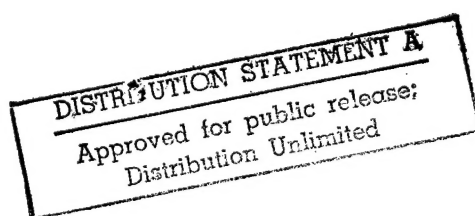
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ABSTRACT

TITLE: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Korean War: The Formative Period

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The half decade following World War II represented an era of austerity, uncertainty, and tremendous challenge for the United States national command authority. Conditions and developments characteristic of these years were a severe reduction in armed forces capabilities; contentious issues dividing the military services; a near exclusive defense policy focus on Europe; a growing Soviet threat; an expectation that future war would be total war; and a general unpreparedness to execute a limited war marked by the non-use of full military capability. The role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was about to undergo a dramatic transformation, as did that of the military under its control in the prosecution of battle campaigns with directed outcomes falling short of total victory.

In June, 1950, the JCS faced a crisis of national proportion involving a country that did not initially enjoy the status of "national security interest;" a heroic theater commander prone to challenge higher authority; and an overriding concern for avoiding actions tantamount to hostilities with the Soviet Union.

Against this backdrop, the collective and individual performance of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the first six months of the Korean War represented an appropriate balance of professional military judgment and conduct under the condition of civilian control of the military.

[I]t is for the very purpose of permitting the general-in-chief to give his whole attention to the supreme direction of the operations that he ought to be provided with staff officers competent to relieve him of the details of execution. Their functions are therefore necessarily very intimately connected, and woe to an army where these authorities cease to act in concert!

Antoine Henri Jomini (1:135)

INTRODUCTION

Not uncommonly we expect from those who comprise the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff to each embody the most desirable traits of a military professional: a deep commitment to the nation's most revered ideals and institutions; an unyielding degree of personal integrity; a profound sense of duty; a marked competence in the conduct of military affairs; and a keen awareness of influences on matters of military interest, as well as effects of military decisions and actions. Indeed, many have written on the impact of the JCS on policymaking, in large part critical either of the process or of individual or collective performance.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the performance of the JCS during the initial period of the Korean War, from June to November 1950. Against the backdrop of the domestic and foreign political setting of the post-World War II and Cold War era, JCS performance during this period represented an appropriate balance of professional military judgment and conduct under the condition of civilian control of the military.

The research methodology used throughout the study is a review of predominantly direct, primary source material—memos, messages, and personal accounts of the principal players. The intent is to examine the JCS in the context of events and trends of the times, and assess the significance of their actions on the merits of those conditions as they then existed.

One cannot, therefore, understand and appreciate the commanders of the past until one has placed oneself in the situation of their times, not so much by a painstaking study of all its details as by an accurate appreciation of its major determining features. (2:593)

THE SETTING: Washington

During World War II military leaders had a profound influence in the formulation of foreign policy. Roosevelt tended to rely more upon his generals than his civilian advisers. He played an active, personal, direct role as the nation's commander-in-chief and worked routinely with the chiefs, leaving matters of the nation's mobilization to the service secretaries. (3:8) Roosevelt likely became familiar enough with the services' war planning to make informed decisions without imposing upon the JCS or restricting their latitude for developing strategy. He created the climate that not only enabled the service chiefs to confer with their British counterparts with negligible risk to national policy, but also allowed him to attend to other matters of great import. He met personally and frequently with the chiefs to immediately get at the very heart of issues, to develop a rapport with his military advisors, and to shield them from outside influence. Ever cautious in following the protocols of field command, he neither maintained nor exercised any pretense to usurp the authority of any service chief or interfere in the field. (4:42-65)

He kept a firm, if outwardly loose, hold on the reins of national policy and reserved the right to make his own strategic choices among the conflicting opinions and divergent factors - economic, political, diplomatic, and military - converging on his office. (4:63)

Truman's style was different. More of a board chairman in the decision making process, he preferred structure over informal, ad hoc gatherings. Initially electing not to routinely attend National Security Council meetings, he viewed the NSC as a " 'channel for collective advice and information' " (5:30) the President retained for himself " 'complete freedom to accept, reject and amend the Council's advice and to consult with other members of his official family' ." This preserved the " ' prerogative of the President to determine such policy and enforce it' " and prevented the NSC from operating as a forum for hasty presidential decisions. (5:30) His perspective changed with the invasion of South Korea.

He began to use the council as a group of senior collaborators searching with him for the best policies....[W]ithin days of the June 25, 1950, North Korean invasion...Truman was consulting his council almost daily. In the six months immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, seven NSC meetings had considered twenty-four papers and taken thirty-nine actions. Between the beginning of the war and the end of 1950...there were eighteen NSC meetings discussing fifty-three papers and taking ninety-seven actions. President Truman attended almost all of them. (5:32)

Acheson described these gatherings as deliberately

...kept small; aides and brief carriers were excluded, a practice...that made free and frank debate possible. Those present came prepared to present their views themselves, and had previously filed memoranda. Matters brought before the council were of importance worthy of the personal attention of the highest officers and decision by the President. (6:733)

The country lacked a prestigious and competent senior civil service, and in large part those civilians who occupied key positions in the foreign policy and national security structures were more familiar with domestic economic and social reformation than they were with defense policy. In light of Truman's contempt for "most professional military officers," in times of need he relied heavily on the experience of senior military leaders and was careful to place those he revered into positions of responsibility. (7:4,234) Personal accounts have suggested an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence. Of Marshall, Truman wrote, "This country and the free world owe him a debt of gratitude for his brilliant planning and masterly execution." (8:235) Marshall later observed of Truman, "I could get him to approve anything, but I knew enough to know I didn't have the whole field...He would just accept it and I was afraid of that because while I felt that way, there were other facets...that I might not understand." (9:331) Bradley, in mid-1945, recalling his third meeting with Truman, observed, "I liked what I saw. He was direct, unpretentious, clear-thinking and forceful." (10:444) During a difficult period as Veteran's Administration chief, Bradley's admiration for the President grew when Truman supported him in the face of heated political opposition. (10:449) Referring to his service as JCS Chairman, Bradley later wrote:

...the President's confidence in me had substantially increased. Until the Korean War, I had seen the President in my official capacity as Chairman... only infrequently (seven times in 1950 prior to the outbreak of the war). By July 1950,...I saw him daily (or more often) to brief him on the war and other pertinent military matters. On his insistence, all orders to MacArthur were personally approved by him...I became Truman's chief and most trusted military adviser. (10:542)

Evidently, the President had grown to greatly respect his JCS Chairman, as well as suspect his Pacific Theater commander. In recounting a mid-June 1945 Potomac River cruise with some close, trusted

civilian advisers, Truman, in the context of the Pacific War and relations with allies, recorded in his diary:

...and what to do with Mr. Prima Donna, Brass Hat, Five Star MacArthur. He's worse than the Cabots and the Lodges - they at least talked with one another before they told God what to do. Mac tells God right off. It is a very great pity we have to have stuffed Shirts like that in key positions. I don't see why in Hell Roosevelt didn't order Wainwright home and let MacArthur be a martyr.... We'd have had a real General and a fighting man if we had Wainwright and not a play actor and a bunco man such as we have now.

Don't see how a country can produce such men as Robert E. Lee, John J. Pershing, Eisenhower, & Bradley and at the same time produce Custers, Pattons, and MacArthurs. (11:47)

In crisis Truman trusted his subordinates, exacted and used their inputs, and effectively delegated responsibility, preserving for himself authority to make the hard decisions. Acheson commented:

He expected, and received, the loyalty he gave. As only those close to him knew, Harry S. Truman was two men. One was the public figure... The other was the patient, modest, considerate, and appreciative boss, helpful and understanding in all official matters, affectionate and sympathetic in any private worry or sorrow.... He made the ultimate decisions upon full and detailed knowledge, leaving to lieutenants the execution. (6:730,733)

Indeed, on occasion, Truman "had an appetite, too much of a one, really, for unhesitating decision." (12:202) Truman's resolve to answer North Korean aggression with force was one of these instances. (7:67; 5:32)

But the post-World War II years were difficult for the armed forces. In an effort to blunt an excessive national debt (between \$250 and \$280 billion), curb inflation, and approach a balanced federal budget, Truman chose to target military expenditures. Under his direction the defense budget plummeted from about \$100 billion to \$11 billion, with a further decrease planned (but never executed) between \$6 and \$7 billion. (11:133) These cuts were coupled with dramatic personnel reductions. By the end of 1948, armed forces uniformed personnel numbered 1.5 million, a drop from 12 million three years earlier. The Army fell from 6 million and 100 divisions to an "administrative... force" of initially 530,000 (later 677,000) and 10 divisions; the Navy from 3.8 million (including 480,000 marines) and 40 carriers to 515,000 (including 86,000 marines) and 11 carriers; and the Air Force (the Army Air Forces until

passage of the National Security Act of 1947) from 2.3 million and 218 groups to 48 groups. (7:6-9;
10:474) Of this troublesome period where readiness, force structure, and modernization became

billpayers for the public debt, Bradley observed:

[Truman] continued to believe that a sound national economy was more vital than any other factor.

Many people, including not a few military men, shared Truman's views on military spending....Of course I wanted sufficient funds to field a viable Army to meet our growing worldwide commitments. But my view was that military spending should not exceed a *reasonable* level...

What was a "reasonable" level of military spending?...about \$14 billion. [Truman] adamantly held to that figure. I thought it was a bit too low, but I supported the President.

From this distance, I must say that this decision was a mistake, perhaps the greatest of Truman's presidency. My support of his decision -- my belief that significantly higher defense spending would probably wreck the economy -- was likewise a mistake, perhaps the greatest mistake I made in my postwar years in Washington. (10:487)

Stated or otherwise, there understandably remained a certain discomfort with what some considered the witting subordination of national security interests to domestic political concerns. A noted observer placed the issue in the context of the times:

Truman's decision, then, was to reject major expansion of the armed forces in what was to prove the dangerous period beginning in 1949. A number of considerations -- belief that war was not imminent, fear of inflation, Marshall's influence, the rising cost of civilian programs, the desire to avoid peaks and valleys in military spending, and uncertainty as to whether an extra billion or so would insure security -- molded the decision. Truman knew, of course, that the country could not fight a war on \$14.4 billion. His decision involved a calculation that the United States would not be at war in the fiscal year ending June 30, 1950. This judgment was to come within six days of being correct. (12:59; Donovan's inference that the nation would have been in a better posture to respond had the North Koreans attacked after July 1, 1950, is highly suspect.)

Tight defense budgets and rapid downsizing only exacerbated already contentious issues dividing the uniformed services: unification of the armed forces; adequacy of the nation's nuclear stockpile; military aid to foreign nations; intense debate between the Air Force and the Navy regarding nuclear strategy and funding for weapons systems; and admirals in open opposition in the media and before Congress against administration defense policies. Making matters worse, presiding over this public vitriol was an impulsive, less than competent, confrontational, tyrannical secretary of defense in the person of Louis Johnson.

THE SETTING: Korea

The awesome closing of World War II and its aftermath brought about a change in warfare and a signal that the role of the professional soldier was about to undergo a dramatic transformation, albeit not as quickly. With the advent of nuclear weapons many leading military as well as civilian figures began to question the nature of US involvement in future wars. There was the widespread conviction that the next war would be total war, as had been the case in WWI and WWII. Further, as the Soviet Union was the antagonist in the Cold War, more than likely it would be the aggressor in the next war on the European battlefield.

Another widely held notion was that since the next war would be total, and its prospect imminent, nuclear weapons would undoubtedly be employed. However, this rationale remained clouded by the fact that: a) the post-War nuclear stockpile was somewhat limited and solely dedicated to the European theater; and b) the military had no developed doctrine for service-wide employment of nuclear weapons. The JCS concurred that the primary purpose of such weapons was strategic bombing. But no serious case had been made for their tactical utility. (13:64-65) Hence, the experts lacked the expertise in doctrine and application.

Lastly, recent Soviet actions in East Europe and Berlin amplified by Stalin's earlier recommitment to relentless conflict with the capitalist countries of the West, coupled with the recent loss of China to the Communists, produced an increased reliance on military power and a warrant to contain Communism by resisting -- or, if need be, punishing -- Communist aggression.

The place South Korea occupied with respect to US strategic interests is generally attributed to Secretary of State Acheson's address delivered to the National Press Club on January 12, 1950. In that speech Acheson traced the Pacific defense line as a

...defensive perimeter [that] runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then... the Ryukus. We hold important defense positions in the Ryuku Islands, and these we will continue to hold....The defensive perimeter runs from the Ryukus to the Philippine Islands....So far as the military security of other areas in the Pacific is concerned, it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack....

Should such an attack occur...the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations, which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their

independence against outside aggression. (6:357)

To some, quite possibly including Eisenhower, Acheson's comments bore the trappings of either new policy formulation or reversal of standing policy, when, in fact, it was an expression of policy formed years earlier, and echoed the previous March in a MacArthur interview in Tokyo. (6:357)

In August 1947, the Department of State, following a State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee proposal for a four power conference to discuss a UN sponsored provisional government in Korea, asked JCS to comment on continued US presence there. JCS opined that the US " 'has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea...' " (14:12-13) The chiefs based their position on primarily three factors. First, without considerable reinforcement, US personnel stationed in Korea were essentially hostage to an invading force. Second, US land and sea based forces could easily interdict enemy staging bases. Third, given the rapidity of demobilization contrasted with the continued need for standing forces as a counterweight to Soviet presence in central Europe, leaving forces in Korea would place global force ratios in favor of the USSR. Alternatively, while removal of forces from Korea was the preferred option, the potential for civil unrest and fading hope of Korean reunification militated against a precipitous withdrawal. As a deterrent against North Korean aggression, in January 1948, the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee (SANACC) proposed creation (following elections in the south) of a strong South Korean constabulary and formation of a new government. JCS agreed to the SANACC proposal and recognized the need for limited military aid, but were still eager to "disengage from Korea." (14:16)

The original milestone for US withdrawal was August 15, 1948. By the end of that year the USSR had removed its forces from the north. At the request of the State Department, Defense adjusted the pullout date to January 15, 1949. Subsequent civil unrest, the threat of a North Korean invasion, and a deteriorating China situation rendered near term withdrawal of US forces from Korea highly impractical. JCS, through the Army Chief of Staff (as executive agent for command and control of unified command operations in Korea), directed MacArthur (then Commander-in-Chief, Far East/CINCFE) to leave in Korea a 7500-man reinforced regimental combat team.(14:19-23) The withdrawal timetable underwent further delay. In the spring of 1949, Bradley, then Army Chief of Staff,

concerned that a US pullout would trigger a North Korean invasion, directed the Army staff to revisit the issue and submit findings to the JCS. In mid-June, (by then Bradley was acting as Chairman), the Joint Chiefs rejected the options outlined in the Army report, holding that Korea's value relative to US national security interests did not warrant aid on the scale of what was provided in the European theater, and to respond to North Korean aggression, national interests would be best served with the US as part of a UN Security Council approved international military force based on " 'complete cooperation and full participation by other member nations.' " (14:25-26) At Bradley's request, JCS Memo 1483/72 (21 July 49) included the provision:

that Korea was of "little strategic value to the United States," that any commitment of US military force in Korea would be ill-advised, and that the introduction of an international army under UN sanction would be practicable only if the forces envisioned by Article 43 of the UN Charter were in existence." (14:27)

By July 1, 1949, there were no longer any US forces in Korea, and by August, the Republic of Korea had an eight division army numbering 100,000 and an air force as a separate service. (14:27-28) The following December, the JCS approved a Joint Outline Emergency War Plan that identified Western Europe as the theater of primary interest. Defense of Korea was not addressed. (14:47-48) Sufficiently and significantly before Acheson's speech to the National Press Club, US policy on Korea was virtually etched in stone, at least until Harry Truman learned of the invasion and took action that dramatically redefined US national interests. (14:123-124; 19:332-333) Against this backdrop entered the Korean War, a limited war characterized by the non-use of full military capability and a shift of warfare even more into the political realm, where the role of the JCS was to markedly change, as did that of the military under its control.

THE WAR: The Decisive Period

On Sunday, June 25, 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38th Parallel and initiated the first war of its kind in American history. The conflict was marked by confusion, disappointment, and following its initial stage, public discontent in the conduct of the war, but more significantly, in the

interrelationship of two key personages. The foremost lesson learned was and is that ultimately the primacy of the Commander-in-Chief in both war and peace remains paramount.

Throughout its course the war was plagued by tension and discord between President Truman and his battlefield commander, General MacArthur. And it is in this regard--namely, the profound unifying effect this had on the Joint Chiefs of Staff--that it is difficult to effectively isolate the JCS and its individual members within the process of the national security decision making structure. During the crucial stages of the war, the President, the secretaries of State and Defense, and the Chairman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff--the "principals"--were overwhelmingly involved in keeping up with MacArthur's recent or anticipated moves and attendant efforts to counter them.

The overall configuration of the war consisted essentially of two phases. The first phase, although relatively brief in duration (approximately one year) embodied intense activity where clearly defined fronts shifted markedly leaving for those on the scene, at least, no misunderstanding which way the war was turning or the reason for change in its direction. (13:58-59) The second phase consisted of protracted armistice negotiations interrupted by charges and countercharges with resultant strategically indecisive combat operations. Since MacArthur's interactions with the principals in Washington had so great an influence on his successor, (15:162) my concern lies with the initial six months of the first phase, a period which set the terms of reference for the remainder of the Korean conflict.

The interface between the principals at home and the theater commander is highlighted by four major developments. The first, although it transpired at the outset of actual hostilities, is MacArthur's conscious intrusion into the President's Formosan policy, for it is an indicator of MacArthur's future unraveling. (6:422-424; 10:547-551; 19:349-358) The events leading up to MacArthur's daring and successful landing at Inchon constitute the next major stage. Third, and perhaps most crucial to the direction and subsequent prosecution of the war, are those events surrounding the decision to cross the 38th Parallel. The final development is the push of UN forces northward to the Manchurian border.

The concept of "theater commander" naturally arises for it constitutes a key set of attitudes and beliefs among wartime decision makers concerning the proper powers of the commander in the field. Acheson points out the near universal acceptance among the principals that the leader at the front knows

best and that it would have been unwise for Washington to meddle in his operations. (6:468; 16:202n)

Until the principals began to seriously question MacArthur's judgment, the entire spectrum of JCS actions bore witness to the strength of this conviction.

In added fashion, the sheer aura and mystique of MacArthur as theater commander had a restraining effect on the national level decision makers. Indeed, his heroic performance in two world wars was a matter of public and historic record. Notwithstanding, as Brodie observed, military leaders of such wide acclaim "...tend to become high risks, possibly difficult to control and certainly difficult to replace." (13:79) Particularly in MacArthur's case, the more battlefield successes he accrued, with a growing tendency for independent action beyond the guidance of his higher authority, the more of a liability he became. It is in this respect that presidential authority over major issues of foreign policy was placed in jeopardy. The evidence clearly indicates that all the principals were sensitive to this danger throughout the period. General Marshall expressed it quite succinctly in testimony before the US Senate:

"It arises from the inherent difference between the position of a commander whose mission is limited to a particular area and a particular antagonist, and the position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense and the President, who are responsible for the total security of the United States...and must weigh the interests and objectives in one part of the world with those in others to attain balance...There is nothing new in this divergence, in our military history... What is new and what brought about the necessity for General MacArthur's removal is the wholly unprecedented situation of a local Theater Commander publicly expressing his displeasure at, and his disagreement with, the foreign policy of the United States. [He]...had grown so far out of sympathy with the established policies of the United States that there is grave doubt as to whether he could any longer be permitted to exercise the authority in making decisions that normal command functions would assign to a Theater Commander." (15:153-154)

MacArthur's penchant for speaking out of turn was not without precedent. In the Pacific War quite a number of issues he generated requiring JCS decision or action sparked debate, controversy, and compromise. For example, upon his departure from Corregidor in March 1942, MacArthur did not bother to inform Marshall that he had reorganized the US Armed Forces Far East Command into four separate commands, and that he would continue to direct actions through an advance command post without relinquishing command. Both Marshall and Roosevelt assumed that Wainwright had taken command

upon MacArthur's departure. In three days with a series of memorandums to the President and separate messages to Wainwright and MacArthur, Marshall established order to the command problem in the Philippines. (17:139-144) In another instance, soon after his arrival in Australia, MacArthur went public with his intention "to develop a strong offensive to drive the Japanese back out of conquered territory." (18:121) In early April 1942, as Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific Area, with the directive to "prepare to take the offensive," MacArthur, in pursuit of obtaining more aircraft for Australia, managed to square off two prime ministers (Curtin and Churchill) against one another with the President in the middle. In Washington there was "considerable distress," and Marshall immediately cabled MacArthur:

"...It is realized that you are not concerned in the nature of communications passing between the 2 Prime Ministers but where these take form of definite request for reinforcements for Southwest Pacific Area they create confusion unless originated by you as Supreme Commander and transmitted directly to the U.S. War Department which acts as Executive for U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff in controlling that area....It is requested that all communications to which you are a party and which relate to strategy and major reinforcements be addressed only to the War Department." (18:125)

In a polite, though likely not embarrassed reply, MacArthur gave his explanation, insisted that he had followed correct procedures, claimed that any hearsay comments were beyond his control, and finished with an assessment of Australia's security posture. In a subsequent cable, Roosevelt, in a less than subtle, somewhat patronizing tone, reminded MacArthur of the much larger problems the President faces daily and added:

"I see no reason why you should not continue discussion of military matters with the Australian Prime Minister, but I hope you will try to have him treat them as confidential matters and not use them for public messages or for appeals to Churchill and me." (18:126)

MacArthur's persistent appetite for self-initiated public statements regarding foreign and defense policy, too often either in the absence of or at odds with the official Washington position, continued in the post-WWII era. In September 1945, MacArthur announced the withdrawal of 200,000 troops from Japan having neither the approval of nor consult with the President. (6:126) Five years later, as CINCFE, MacArthur continued to place the national command authority in a position of disadvantage, particularly following a June 29 offer by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of 33,000 troops to assist the UN effort in Korea. The President subsequently turned down this offer based on JCS and State advice that Formosan

intervention would draw a hostile response from Communist China. The JCS additionally noted that 1) Formosan forces were ill-equipped to engage North Korean armor, and 2) the logistical expense would be far better spent on US troops and supplies. (6:412; 19:341-342)

Upon learning of the decision, one in which he had previously indicated his concurrence, (19:348) MacArthur expressed an eager willingness to personally explain the US position to Chiang. At least two key individuals were aware of MacArthur's intended visit to Formosa. During their mid-July visit to the UN headquarters in Tokyo, MacArthur informed Army Chief of Staff Collins and Air Force Chief Vandenberg of his intentions. (16:271-272; 19:349) Uncertain, however, was whether prior to July 31, the actual date of the trip, the principals recognized the impact of MacArthur's visit. Although Acheson states that "...official Washington was startled to read in the press on August 1 that General MacArthur had arrived in Formosa...and gone into conference with [Chiang]...", (6:422) Truman does not indicate that he was unaware of the upcoming trip, but rather implies that he had neither prior knowledge of the timing nor subject of MacArthur's subsequent talks with the Generalissimo. (19:349-358) Available accounts suggest that by the time the President's decision on the JCS recommendation regarding the Formosan visit officially reached MacArthur, he had already arrived in Taipei.

On July 27, at a meeting of the National Security Council, among the topics of discussion was US policy in regard to Formosa. The President approved a JCS proposal that a military aid and survey team from MacArthur's headquarters be sent to Formosa. Truman states that the decision was "...communicated to General MacArthur by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on August 3...", (19:349) three days after MacArthur arrived. Other evidence indicates that prior to July 31, the JCS suggested that MacArthur dispatch one of his senior officers and later go himself, yet the decision was his as to who should go. (20:73) It appears reasonably certain that all parties understood that MacArthur was, in fact, going to visit Formosa. Presumably, the principals were thinking in terms of a CINCFE appraisal of Formosan forces and capabilities. MacArthur's intentions were not so limited.

What transpired for the next day and a half became a severe irritant in the weeks to come and a cause for concern that would last through the course of the war. Based not only on Chiang's remarks following the meeting, but MacArthur's report as well, Washington felt that some nations would suspect a

US ploy intended not to neutralize but to prompt Nationalist Chinese action against the mainland. Given this concern, Truman found it necessary at this time to dispatch Averell Harriman to clarify the Administration's Far Eastern policy to the general. On August 10, the day before Harriman's return, MacArthur released a statement indicating that his talks with Chiang were only "military" in nature, firmly denying that they had any political significance. (21:102; 22:128) He concluded, however:

My visit has been maliciously represented to the public by those who invariably in the past have propagandized a policy of defeatism and appeasement in the Pacific...I hope the American people will not be misled by the insinuations, speculations, and bold misstatements... which tend, if they are not indeed designed, to promote disunity and destroy faith and confidence in the American nations and institutions. (22:129)

Harriman noted in his follow-up report to Truman:

For reasons which are rather difficult to explain, I did not feel that we came to a full agreement on the way we believed things should be handled on Formosa and with the Generalissimo. He accepted the President's position and will act accordingly, but without full conviction. (19:351-352)

Likely by design, the JCS with Truman's approval reiterated the intent of the directive for the defense of Formosa, and reminded the general on August 14 that " '...no one other than the President as Commander-In-Chief has the authority to order or authorize preventative [sic] action against concentrations on the mainland...' " (20:74; 19:354)

For awhile the matter settled, but then suddenly reappeared in the form of a statement prepared by MacArthur for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and released to the press on August 26 by the public relations office at General Headquarters in Tokyo. (19:354; 16:274) MacArthur's statement was a lengthy description of Formosa's strategic importance to the US, the tenor of which Truman claimed "...was critical of the very policy which [the general] had so recently told Harriman he would support" (19:354-355; 23:218-222) and ran counter to the US stated position regarding Formosa before the UN. It was at this point that President Truman gave close consideration to relieving MacArthur as the field commander, but decided against it as he did not wish the general to suffer any personal indignity, his only concern being that the world knew that his statement was not official US foreign policy. (19:355-356) It is interesting that Truman, who fully recognized that "there can only be one voice on stating the position of

this country in the field of foreign relations," (19:355) would jeopardize the security interests of this nation and others in order to let the general save face.

None of the principals likely had prior knowledge of the statement. Truman's reaction was swift. He immediately directed Secretary of Defense Johnson to send a message to the general stating that the President had ordered him to withdraw the statement. (6:424. It is interesting to note Johnson's irresoluteness at this juncture, namely, whether "he dare send such a message" to MacArthur. Within three weeks Marshall replaced him as Secretary of Defense.) MacArthur's first reaction was one of protest, that he was only supporting the President's policy and that his views were " 'purely...personal ones.' " (16:276) Although the statement was withdrawn, Truman clearly recognized the need to follow it up with a personal letter carefully outlining the US position on Formosa. (19:356) Within the next several weeks the tension subsided as plans were in the offing for an upcoming UN offensive.

A counterattack against North Korean forces had been in the offing for some time. MacArthur first conceived such a plan on his June 29 visit to the front prior to the arrival of US troops. At that time he immediately recognized that a continued Communist advance would steadily drain the North's logistical capability. However, until the operation reached its final stages, MacArthur was, perhaps, the only one confident of its success.

The JCS received its first indication of the plan as a result of the July visit by Generals Collins and Vandenberg. (16:115) More than likely the JCS initial reaction was one of skepticism for two reasons: 1) General Collins upon returning to Washington reported the broad outlines of the plan and noted his skepticism; and 2) MacArthur's request for US marines to be used in the operation was placed on hold. (16:115-116) On July 10, MacArthur had cabled the JCS requesting a marine division and an air wing to arrive no later than September 10. Based on Admiral Sherman's recommendation and the general feeling among the chiefs that overcommitment in Korea could generate Communist pressure elsewhere in the world, the chiefs held off on MacArthur's request.

MacArthur would have none of this. He insisted that the September 10 timeline was

“ ‘absolutely vital’ ” to the operation’s success. (16:117) Again feeling his Pacific Command being slighted in favor of Europe, he stated, “ ‘There can be no demand for [the division’s] use elsewhere which can equal the urgency of the immediate battle mission contemplated for it.’ ” (16:117) Of more direct concern to the JCS was the threat posed against General Walker’s Eighth Army forces and against the base port of Pusan. MacArthur recognized this and took decisive action to bolster Walker’s forces. However, the JCS were neither willing to allow MacArthur’s plans go unchallenged nor permit him to accept complete responsibility for the operation:

A theater Commander is always given broad leeway by the JCS in planning and conducting operations. However, in order to discharge their responsibilities to the President, the [JCS] must have up-to-date information on their field commanders’ plans. President Truman never interfered with military operations, but in the Korean war - a war in peacetime, without a formal declaration by Congress - he was deeply committed personally and wished to be kept constantly informed. General MacArthur did not wish to conceal anything from Washington, but he was not very communicative about his plans. He was skeptical about the security of the information he furnished Washington. (16:120)

Nevertheless, in an August 10 meeting at the White House, the President, Secretary Johnson and the JCS agreed to send nearly two divisions to Korea. (16:121) In addition, the JCS decided to dispatch General Collins and Admiral Sherman to confer with MacArthur. Several have observed that the purpose of the August 23 visit was “to make MacArthur call the whole thing off.” (20:81; 24:77) A terrain analysis of Inchon revealed an obvious loss of tactical, perhaps operational and strategic advantage for a large amphibious operation. Moreover, Bradley was of the opinion that large scale amphibious operations were a thing of the past. (21:126; 20:81) Even MacArthur estimated his chances for success at one in five thousand, (6:447; 20:82; 21:134; 24:76) an assessment hardly based on analysis.

The overwhelming impression of the August 23 briefing was the presentation of a totally infeasible tactical operation somehow justified by the enthusiasm, exuberance, and self-confidence of its designer:

“For the enemy commander will reason that no one would be so brash as to make such an attempt...If my estimate is inaccurate and should I run into a defense with which I cannot cope, I will be there personally and will immediately withdraw our forces before they are committed to a bloody setback. The only loss then will be my professional reputation... But Inchon will succeed. And it will save 100,000 lives.” (16:125-126)

Collins cites that the majority of the audience was favorably impressed with MacArthur's exposition. (16:126) However, at least two key individuals (namely, Collins and Sherman) immediately recognized that more than MacArthur's reputation was at stake. While Collins favored a landing at Kunsan because of enemy strength at Inchon and his ability to mass forces rapidly, (20:82; 16:126) Sherman cited the hydrographic hazards at Inchon and spent an hour and a half the following morning trying to convince MacArthur to land at a beach more suitable. (24:76; 20:83) Apparently all that came of that ninety minute affair were insistent reiterations of confidence and optimism by MacArthur. (24:76)

On August 28, with the President's authorization, the JCS cabled MacArthur a conditional approval of his plans for Inchon, or, if necessary a " 'favorable beach south of Inchon,' " or should he desire, an amphibious landing at Kunsan. (16:127) The JCS also expressed their understanding that alternative plans were being drawn up for contingency purposes.

These actions indicate that Truman initially encountered among the chiefs benign opposition to the Inchon operation, and thereupon directed provisional approval only. Bradley's dislike for then modern day amphibious warfare coupled with Collins' and Sherman's arguments concerning tactical advantage strongly suggest that the JCS were not keen about the operation. Although Truman in his memoirs states that by the time the plans reached his desk they carried JCS approval, in addition to his own confidence in the operation's success, (19:358) it is highly unlikely that he was unaware of JCS concerns while others (including Acheson and Johnson) apparently were. (6:447; 24:77) This aspect is reinforced by what Collins terms a "routine...established from the very onset of the Korean war, in which the JCS kept the President informed..." (16:128-129) Collins is most deliberate in presenting his argument, which generally coincides with Truman's personal account. (19:358) Of particular interest is the following passage from Collins:

I doubt whether we would have *disapproved* a theater Commander's plans without the concurrence of the President. We accepted full responsibility for our own actions in querying MacArthur on his plans, expressing to him our concern about their feasibility, and giving our final approval. (16:129, italics added)

By September 5, the most current information the JCS had was as of August 28. Fully aware that MacArthur had issued a detailed operations order on August 30, the JCS requested an information update.

on any modifications to the plans. MacArthur replied that there had been no change in the plans and that a courier would be on the way with a detailed account of the operation by September 11, too late should the JCS decide to modify the operation or should the President decide to intervene. (16:128) To every JCS inquiry MacArthur replied with profound "reiterations of confidence," whereupon the JCS finally radioed formal approval to him on September 8. (16:128)

The intent of the August 28 JCS message should have been clear. MacArthur was to keep the JCS informed whether or not there were changes to the plan. Having received no further information, coupled with the untimely arrival of the detailed plan, and somewhat influenced by MacArthur's overwhelming confidence as well as that of the President's, the JCS likely had no other choice but to recommend approval.

The significance of the Inchon landing's near flawless success made possible by the brilliance of its planning far exceeded objectives obtained at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of the war. Inchon set the tenor of the relationship between a president assisted by able advisers and his battlefield commander. Inchon wrested the responsibility for national level policy formulation away from those with whom it should have remained and passed it to one who was not accountable in the eyes of the people when policy failed.

The success of Inchon was so great, and the subsequent prestige of General MacArthur was so overpowering, that the Chiefs hesitated thereafter to question later plans and decisions of the general, which should have been challenged. (16:141-142)

The President's July 17 directive that the National Security Council staff prepare recommendations for postaggression policy signaled the earliest indication of the Administration's intent to expand the war and change national military objectives (6:451; 14:220-228) There had been no hesitation nor cause for reflection for MacArthur. Several days earlier he flatly informed Generals Collins and Vandenberg " 'I intend to destroy and not [merely] to drive back the North Korean forces...I may have to occupy all of North Korea' ." (16:144)

It became apparent rather early that continuance of the attack beyond the 38th Parallel was a favored action among the JCS. Acheson questioningly noted the Pentagon's July 31 proposals calling for action, provided that the mission would not endanger the nation's strategic posture; the Soviet Union

would not intervene; the President, Congress, and the UN would adopt as a war aim a united, free, and independent Korea; and sufficient UN occupation forces would assure Korean security. (6:451) Collins further adds that on his August visit with Sherman to MacArthur's headquarters, the three agreed that "he should be authorized to continue the attack across the 38th Parallel." (16:144; 24:112) On August 17, in an obviously coordinated statement before the UN Security Council, US Ambassador Austin espoused views largely similar to the third point of the July 31 Pentagon proposal. (21:155; 20:99) On September 1, President Truman informed the nation that a major point in US aims and intentions toward the Koreans was their right to freedom, independence, and unity. (19:358-359)

Collins summarizes the JCS "cold" reaction to the National Security Council study (NSC 81) by describing the paper's insufficiency in terms of its failure to address the implementation of any definitive option. (16:144-145) Specifically, in proposing restoration of the status quo ante and a "stabilized" front at the 38th Parallel, the study failed to stipulate a course of action that would remove for the future those essential conditions which caused the war in the first place, namely, an armed, hostile North Korea bent on unifying the peninsula with at least encouragement and potential covert assistance from Communist China and the Soviet Union. (14:220,225-226) Although the Joint Chiefs prevailed, it does not appear that anyone raised a significant counterargument except for some at State who were inclined toward George Kennan's view that cautioned against pursuing North Korean forces north of the 38th Parallel. (6:451)

On September 11, the policy carried presidential authority whereupon the role of the United States changed from one of " 'resistance to aggression' " to " 'punishment of aggression.' " (13:70) On September 15, with Truman's approval the JCS dispatched to MacArthur a directive outlining their July 31 proposals, as well as conclusions from the NSC staff paper, NSC 81/1. (16:144-146; 6:451-452) This was followed by a September 27 directive to MacArthur which addressed future operations of the UN Command. Its wording was rather explicit in terms of global concerns and containment of the conflict to the Korean peninsula.

"Your military objective is the destruction of the North Korean armed forces. In attaining this objective you are authorized to conduct military operations, including amphibious and airborne landings or ground operations, north of the 38th parallel in Korea, provided that at the time of such operations there

has been no entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese Communist forces, no announcement of intended entry, nor a threat to counter our operations militarily in North Korea....[U]nder no circumstances will your forces cross the Manchurian or USSR borders of Korea and, *as a matter of policy*, no non-Korean ground forces will be used in the northeast provinces bordering the Soviet Union or in the area along the Manchurian border. Furthermore, support of your operations north or south of the 38th parallel will not include air or naval action against Manchuria or against USSR territory..."(24:116,536n from JCS 92801, italics added here)

The JCS clearly intended to limit the use of US forces north of the 38th Parallel:

"When organized armed resistance by North Korean forces has been brought substantially to an end, you should direct the ROK forces to take the lead in disarming remaining North Korean units and enforcing the terms of surrender. Guerrilla activities should be dealt with primarily by the [ROK] forces...with minimum participation by United Nations contingents.

Circumstances obtaining at the time will determine the character of and necessity for occupation of North Korea. Your plans for such operations will be forwarded for approval to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. You will also submit your plan for future operations north of the 38th Parallel to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval." (16:147-148)

Of note, the Joint Chiefs were equally concerned about the introduction of Communist Chinese or Soviet forces in South Korea:

"In the event of the open or covert employment of major Chinese Communist units south of the 38th parallel, you should continue the action as long as action by your forces offers a reasonable chance of successful resistance." (19:360)

"In the event of the open or covert employment of major Soviet units south of the 38th Parallel, you will assume the defense, make no move to aggravate the situation and report to Washington." (6:453)

Each set of instructions contained a degree of obvious uncertainty, in some ways "obscured...by the intoxication of victory," (20:103) regarding Soviet or Chinese intentions. While Chinese intervention was manageable, the introduction of Soviet forces had ramifications, ostensibly in Europe, less so in the Middle East.

MacArthur immediately forwarded his plan for operations north of the 38th Parallel.. Essentially, it called for the movement of the Eighth Army across the Parallel, through Kaesong and Sariwon, and on to Pyongyang. Meanwhile, the X Corps was to be sealifted to the east coast harbor of Wonsan. From there it would proceed toward Pyongyang to link up with the Eighth Army. Only ROK forces would be used beyond a point fifty miles north of the Pyongyang-Wonsan line and sixty miles northwest of

Pyongyang. Both State and Defense endorsed the plan for the President who subsequently approved the operation on September 29. It was at this time that Defense Secretary Marshall dispatched his portentous message to MacArthur: " 'We want you to feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of the 38th parallel.' " (6:453; 24:116,536n from JCS 92985)

There are basically two explanations for Marshall's telegram. Collins claims that it originated from a reaction to unconfirmed reports that the Eighth Army was to hold up at the 38th Parallel and await permission to cross. (16:148) This appears related to Marshall's desire to avoid a UN " 'vote on passage of the 38th parallel...' " (14:242) But this does not seem to have been the case as there is sufficient evidence indicating that MacArthur's plan had arrived prior to Marshall's cable, well in time for review and approval. The probable motivation behind Marshall's action was to "soothe" the effect on MacArthur that members of the JCS, men without the benefit of MacArthur's age, rank, experience, and talent, corporately acting in the name of the President, had approval authority over MacArthur's operations. (6:453-454) Marshall, highly regarded for his statesmanship and record of loyal performance, was too much of a professional to present even the slightest impression of contravening established policy.

With alarming alacrity MacArthur replied quickly and ominously to Marshall's cable: " 'Unless and until the enemy capitulates, I regard all Korea as open for our military operations.' " (6:453) On October 1, he had notified the JCS of his desire to issue a "dramatic announcement" upon crossing the 38th Parallel. (19:361) The chiefs opposed such a statement, ostensibly for operational reasons, but equally to preclude another unnecessary, embarrassing political indiscretion.

When MacArthur submitted his plan to the JCS on September 28, he also reported that his headquarters had no indications of either Soviet or Chinese commitment of armed forces to Korea. (24:116) Following MacArthur's first call for surrender on October 1, Communist Chinese Foreign Minister Chou En-lai signaled the first threat of communist intervention, assuring to the Indian Ambassador to Peking his country's entry should UN forces cross the 38th Parallel. The principals' first reaction was to discount the warning for essentially four reasons. First, there had been no hard intelligence from MacArthur's headquarters indicating a Chinese buildup. Next, the Indian Ambassador had somewhat of a history of unreliability in reporting Chinese actions. (19:362) Third, the pending UN

resolution regarding Korean stability if adopted would constitute a mandate for UN military operations in North Korea. Finally, the roundabout way in which the Chinese made their intentions known gave more form than substance to their claim. (16:172-174)

Arriving intelligence reports began to indicate a massive Chinese buildup in North Korea. With the possibility gradually becoming real, the JCS, with presidential approval, sent to MacArthur on October 9 an amplification of an earlier directive:

“ ‘Hereafter in the event of the open or covert employment anywhere in Korea of major Chinese Communist units, without prior announcement, you should continue the action as long as, in your judgment, action by forces now under your control offers a reasonable chance of success. In any case you will obtain authorization from Washington prior to taking any military action against objectives in Chinese territory.’ ” (19:362; 24:116,536n from JCS 93709)

There prevailed at the time a widespread notion that though the Chinese “lacked necessary air and naval support, they could intervene effectively but ‘not necessarily decisively.’ ” (16:175) Further, the collective national leadership assessed that the Soviets would not risk global war by sanctioning Chinese combat forces in Korea. Thus, they determined that Communist Chinese participation in the war would be little more than covert assistance to North Korea. (16:175)

On October 9, MacArthur issued another call for surrender, citing the resolution adopted by the General Assembly two days earlier as giving him authority as UN Forces Commander “to take such military action as may be necessary to enforce the decrees of the United Nations.” (6:455) The statement was bold indeed, and likely by more than just coincidence, Truman decided it was necessary to personally confer with MacArthur.

The reason for Truman’s decision was fourfold. Obviously he was concerned with the prospect of Communist Chinese intervention. Next, he wanted to make sure that the UN “police action” did not develop into a full scale war with China or the Soviet Union. Third, Truman never had any personal contact with the general and he felt that MacArthur “ought to know his Commander in Chief and that [Truman] ought to know the senior field commander in the Far East.” (19:362-363) Lastly, the President believed that having been so out of touch with what was happening in the United States, MacArthur “might adjust more easily if he heard it from [the President] directly.” (19:363)

On October 15, Truman and MacArthur held their conference on Wake Island. (The choice of locations gives some indication of the President's deference toward the general.) Accompanying the President were General Bradley, Army Secretary Pace, Dean Rusk, Averell Harriman, and Ambassador-at-Large Philip Jessup. Initially upon his arrival the President and MacArthur talked for more than an hour, MacArthur assuring the President "that the victory was won in Korea...[and] that the Chinese Communists would not attack..." (19:365) At the larger meeting the general convincingly argued that the war would be over by Thanksgiving and that US troop withdrawals, except for a two-division occupation force, could commence by Christmas. When asked again by the President, this time for the others' benefit, about the possibility of Chinese or Soviet involvement, MacArthur stated that there was "very little" chance the Chinese would enter since they could only get fifty or sixty thousand men into Korea and these forces, having no air support, would be "slaughtered." He went on to say that the upcoming winter would limit the number of ground forces the Soviets could introduce and that overall Soviet air strength could not compare to that of the US. He completely ruled out a combined Soviet air/Chinese ground operation on the basis that "[i]t just wouldn't work..." (19:366) Bradley was noted to have asked whether the 2d or 3d Infantry Division could be released from the Far East Command to bolster NATO defenses. MacArthur cited no problems or preferences and gave Bradley his choice of divisions. (16:154) One reporter satirically observed that President Truman left Wake " 'highly pleased with the results, like an insurance salesman who had at last signed up an important prospect while the latter appeared dubious about the extent of the coverage.' " (20:121-122, attributed to New York Times correspondent Anthony Leviero)

The offensive across the 38th Parallel began on September 30 when the ROK I Corps moved north toward Wonsan. On October 9, lead elements of the Eighth Army made their advance on Pyongyang. Because of delays in onloading and mineclearing operations, the landing of the X Corps at Wonsan, originally scheduled to coincide with the Eighth Army's movement, did not take place until October 26, sixteen days after the ROK I Corps had captured the city and seven days following the capture of Pyongyang. ROK II Corps executed the link up on the Pyongyang-Wonsan road a week before the X Corps landed at Wonsan.

The earliest indication of a sudden change in the original plan came on October 17 when MacArthur issued UN Operations Order No. 4, to begin what he believed to be the final phase of the war. In effect, what the order entailed was the extension of the objective line to points approximately forty miles south of the Manchurian border and about one hundred miles from the Soviet border on the east coast. (16:177) The objective line on its western edge was about ten miles ahead of the original line approved on September 29. However, the objective's center and eastern edge ranged from fifty to one hundred miles beyond the one of September 29. But what particularly caught Washington's attention was MacArthur's directive that "[a]ll units, without regard to their composition, were to press forward to the assigned objective line." (16:177) His instructions to his commanders were that they were "to think of this as merely an intermediate goal..." (15:49) that "the drive to the north [was] to be spearheaded by American units." (19:372)

It should have been clear to all that MacArthur had acted in direct contravention of his superiors in Washington. What is not certain is the reaction of the JCS, or for that matter, any of the principals. Army Chief of Staff Collins has no recollection of JCS objection at this juncture, (16:177) and neither does it appear that anyone else bothered to take the general to task. Available evidence suggests, that the Administration did not begin to stir until a week later when, in conjunction with the northward movement of Eighth Army and X Corps forces, MacArthur authorized his commanders "to employ any and all forces necessary to secure all of North Korea." (16:180) Truman notes that the chiefs "expressing concern" and queried MacArthur on his justification for such a radical departure from established policy. (19:372; 14:275-276) Acheson reinforces, this account:

So stunned was the Pentagon that the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent out a timorous inquiry to MacArthur saying that although he undoubtedly had sound reasons for issuing this order they would like to be informed of them "as your action is a matter of some concern here..." (6:462)

MacArthur's justification centered on five basic assumptions. First, "as a matter of military necessity," it was essential that the operation be led by a force of more "sufficient strength" with "more seasoned and experienced commanders," two fundamental traits which the ROK Army did not possess. (16:180; 6:462; 19:372) Next, he cited his understanding that the September 27 directive was not "final" as it implied the possibility of future amendment. MacArthur premised his third reason on the "as a matter-of policy"

segment of the September 27 directive, that it did not explicitly ban the use of non-ROK forces. He then claimed, to the surprise of everyone, not the least of which the President's, that the whole affair was discussed at the Wake Island conference. Finally, and most assuredly, MacArthur reasoned that Marshall's September 29 cable was a modification of the Joint Chiefs' instructions on the 27th. MacArthur summarized his position:

"I am fully cognizant of the basic purpose and intent of your directive, and every possible precaution is being taken in the premises. The very reverse, however, would be fostered and tactical hazards might even result from other action than that which I have directed." (19:372)

By this time events on the battlefield had assumed a life of their own and were driving decisions in Washington. The JCS argued that it was too late for them to halt the northward movement of US troops and "...at least tacitly accepted MacArthur's defense of his order and made no move to countermand it." (16:180) This position appeared to differ from the intent of Bradley's October 23 statement to the British Chiefs of Staff: " 'We all agree that if the Chinese Communists come into Korea, we get out.' " (14:263) For the next two weeks UN forces encountered stiff organized resistance by what Eighth Army commander General Walton Walker described as " 'well organized and well trained' " Chinese regulars. (6:42) The messages arriving in Washington were marked contrastedly by MacArthur's expressions of alarm and confidence. He became obsessed with the idea that if he controlled the Yalu bridges, he could isolate and destroy Chinese forces on the peninsula.

On November 6, Washington received word that MacArthur had issued an order to his air commander, General Stratemeyer, to target the Korean ends of the Yalu bridges between Antung and Sinuiju and destroy " 'every means of communication and every installation, factory, city and village' " in North Korea excluding the Suiho Dam, Rashin, and other hydroelectric plants. (16:199; 10:584; 6:463) This order directly contravened the standing JCS directive to restrict bombing within five miles of the Manchurian border. Obviously aware of the significance and consequences of such an action, Stratemeyer informed Air Force headquarters in Washington of MacArthur's latest directive.

It is interesting to note that although Stratemeyer's initiative was the first and likely only known action of its kind in the war (that is, a force component commander jumping his chain of command and reporting directly to Washington), it appears that his cable was not the only knowledge Washington had

of MacArthur's most recent move. The Army staff first became aware of the plan "during a routine daily telecon [telephone conference] on November 6." (16:199) More than likely, at least from Collins' account, the two actions—the "routine telecon" and Stratemeyer's cable—were separate actions, but very close in sequence. Prompt action by the Pentagon was necessary for within a matter of hours the air missions were to begin.

The significance of the proposed bombing was the extreme likelihood that the Manchurian city of Antung would be damaged, an action that would have broken a commitment to the British not to attack Manchurian points without their consultation. In addition, the US had been pressing for a resolution in the UN Security Council concerning Chinese intervention. Bombings would have placed this initiative at unacceptable risk. Further, there was the danger of Soviet involvement based on their mutual assistance treaty with Communist China.

The information quickly passed from Air Force headquarters to Under Secretary of Defense Lovett. Upon learning of the intended action and realizing its import and urgency, he immediately notified Acheson. Acheson notified the President and recommended that the action be held up, while Lovett informed Marshall, at the time at his Leesburg residence, (25:699) of the recent ongoing. Marshall concurred with their views and had Lovett direct Air Force Secretary Finletter inform the JCS to delay the bombing pending direct Presidential approval.

At this point, Department of State played a central role in the development of national military strategy for Korea. It had tried previously on October 20 to tie the battle campaign to national objectives and interests upon learning of Chinese intentions to safeguard their Yalu River hydroelectric plants. At that time, State had suggested that MacArthur issue a statement to the UN declaring his intentions to not impede the operations of these plants. The JCS objected on the grounds that such a statement would be militarily undesirable. In effect, Truman had left the decision to MacArthur who, in turn, felt that such a statement would restrict his operations. It appears that the JCS objection stemmed from either a unified position against sanctuary privilege in general, or a reluctance to deal directly with the issue. Regardless, it is rather unlikely that MacArthur had ever intended to grant sanctuary privilege to the Chinese.

MacArthur did not issue a statement. (19:372)

In this latter instance, however, JCS action exemplified a greater sense of urgency and responsibility. The Joint Chiefs moved responsively and decisively in advising the President. Truman, having already noticed a certain disparity in MacArthur's reporting, directed that the bombing be suspended and an inquiry made to determine the sudden urgency for MacArthur's action. Within eighty minutes of launching the air mission, the message was on its way directing MacArthur to suspend the bombing. The JCS informed the general that the matter was being given consideration at the national level, that the decision would be largely based on consultation with the British, and that until further notice all bombing within five miles of the Manchurian border was prohibited. (19:374-375; 6:463-464; 16:199-201)

MacArthur's reply came back immediately in the form of an outright admission that the situation was grave and protested that such limitations on his freedom of action would "be paid for dearly in American and other United Nations blood." (19:375) He argued:

"What I had ordered is entirely within the scope of the rules of war and the resolutions and directions which I have received from the United Nations and constitutes no slightest act of belligerency against Chinese territory, in spite of the outrageous international lawlessness emanating therefrom. I cannot overemphasize the disastrous effect, both physical and psychological, that will result from the restrictions which you are imposing." (19:375)

Then, as if to shift the onus upon the President:

"I trust that the matter be immediately brought to the attention of the President as I believe your instructions may well result in a calamity of major proportion for which I cannot accept the responsibility without his personal and direct understanding of the situation." (19:375)

General Bradley immediately informed the President of MacArthur's reply. Truman later explained his decision:

There were grave dangers involved in a mass bombing attack on a target so close to Manchuria and to Soviet soil...But since General MacArthur was on the scene and felt so strongly that this was of unusual urgency, I told Bradley to give him the "go ahead." (19:375-376)

Of note, the JCS, in deference to the President's concern and that of State and Defense, imposed a significant provision on the "go ahead." Here they made it clear that Manchurian airspace as well as territory was not to be violated. In the days ahead the bombing proved extremely hazardous and relatively

ineffective, and despite MacArthur's subsequent protest, this provision remained inviolate throughout the war and signaled the beginning of more responsible direction of the war effort from Washington. For by this time, it was clearly "an entirely new war," and MacArthur's brilliant reputation had already more than begun to tarnish.

THE AFTERMATH: Trends and Conclusions

In the course of reviewing this relatively brief, but, nevertheless, significant period from late June to mid-November 1950, distinct, recurring patterns of interaction became evident rather early. One of the most striking of these was how the momentum of developments on the battlefield drove national level strategy formulation and decision making. The Inchon landing provided a representative example of a successful combat operation reshaping strategic objectives for Korea. The Joint Chiefs' September 27 specified task to MacArthur to destroy North Korean forces carried the implied, essential task of conducting future operations above the 38th Parallel, though not without JCS, that is, the President's approval. Further, NSC 81's rewritten version (NSC 81/1), which the President approved on September 11, allowed for operations "*close to* the Soviet and Chinese borders, and the use of non-ROK forces in border areas. (14:226-227) As Schnabel pointed out:

UN forces had "no alternative to an advance north of the 38th parallel."
...[M]ost of the UN member governments, including the United States,
sought to play down the significance of the "surveyor's line," and to
allow the UN Commander to be guided by tactical considerations when
he reached the parallel. (14:242)

The President and his advisers were "committed ...to the unification of Korea,...[as] an objective and not a course of action...." virtually leaving the decision to cross into the North to the UN. (14:227-228)

Next, the various accounts indicate that each of the Administration's decisions bore the trappings of consensus among the principal decision makers, to include each service chief of staff, as well as the Chairman. Nowhere in the personal writings of these men, Acheson, or Truman, was there any hint of infighting or polarization among the policy formulators. Despite the fact that Acheson questioned JCS for their July 31 proposals in reference to crossing the 38th Parallel, he admitted State's endorsement of MacArthur's plan:

The plan seemed excellently contrived to create a strong military position from which to exploit the possibilities of the North Korean defeat—either to insure the South...Koreans were strong enough and the Chinese did not intervene, to move toward the UN goal of a united, free, and independent Korea. (6:453)

Moreover, a comparison of these accounts suggests that all available information was, in fact, available to all the principals. Indeed, Marshall appeared somewhat impressed with his counterpart's cooperativeness and candor:

A great contrast to that when I was secretary of defense - the Korean War was going on - the secretary of state, Acheson, would come over with two or three of his men at the Pentagon and sit with me and the chiefs of staff for hours at a time while we were trying to work out these matters. But there was no such rule with the State Department during the war. As a matter of fact, it seems to me on the guidance thing, they got it directly from the president, and that not in concise form but rather casual statements. (9:576)

A third pronounced trend that marked interactions and relationships throughout the period in question is an implicit reluctance, on behalf of all the principals—that is, the Chairman and the JCS, Marshall, Acheson, and Truman—to impose upon, challenge, or countermand the theater commander. This is especially noteworthy and admirable in view of Acheson's access to the President and driving role in the early weeks of the crisis as well as his decided influence regarding air and naval operations throughout the period. (14:89-91,250-255) Near certainly, what kept MacArthur in his position even after his disastrous defeat in the North, which alone would have justified his removal, was not only his stature as a national hero, but also Washington's total dependence on CINC UN Command for staying abreast of developments concerning Korea. As a basis for decision making, the reliability and accuracy of information and intelligence arriving at the national level should have been more closely questioned due alone to the lack of competing alternative sources. This became quite clear with the seemingly sudden, yet rather early build up of Chinese forces in the border regions. Given the absence of timely national level resources (with the exception of tenuous sources in the diplomatic community), the Administration had no other choice but to rely on theater reports containing, selective, processed information with unverifiable and, thus, unchallengeable assessments of Chinese intent.

However, the evidence suggests that MacArthur also misjudged Chinese capabilities causing all to misread Peking's intentions. The persuasive, overwhelming influence of his blazing confidence and

personal conviction that the Peoples Republic of China would not intervene disguised a zealous arrogance which intimidated his subordinate commanders and his staff in the Far East, and imposed itself upon Washington and the nation. Brodie hinted at how the fate of the presidency can hang in the balance in observing that "...the difference in accomplishment between an excellent president and a great one...may lie in knowing when not to believe a general." (13:74)

Influenced by Truman's leadership style, MacArthur's "larger-than-life" image as the seasoned heroic leader, and the limited nature of information available, the Joint Chiefs appeared, at times, to be rather indecisive, as reflected in the timing of their actions and in the wording of their instructions. On the other hand, the series of events surrounding the Inchon operation seem to reflect the converse. Namely, what appears as irresoluteness may well have represented consensus building and a conscious effort both to mask JCS internal disagreements and to present a unified, corporate position with appropriate comportment to the civilian Commander-in-Chief, who vigorously exercised his preference for close and continuous, personal and usually determinative involvement the decision making process. The Joint Chiefs were acutely aware of the President's foremost concern about avoiding any "implication that we were planning to go to war against the Soviet Union." (19:341) As Brodie points out, it is most odd to see members of the JCS continuously reminding members of the United States Congress that the Constitution has designated the President, and only the President, as Commander-in-Chief, and that he and his "appropriate lawfully appointed aides are and ought to be supreme over the military." (13:89)

The Joint Chiefs clearly discerned and well understood that point where the Commander-in-Chief risked crossing over "the line between political control and political interference" in a limited war, the conduct of which enjoyed the full support of neither the American public nor many of its elected representatives. (26:4-6) They were equally able to recognize when the theater commander threatened the Constitutional tradition of civilian supremacy over the military, and advise the President accordingly. As for themselves, collectively and individually they appeared to have reached the correct balance between responsibly attending to the policies of the President and preserving their identity, purpose, and efficacy with respect to their profession, the other branches of government, and the American public. (27:31,35)

The most valuable senior military advisors are those professionally oriented, independent-minded officers...who neither "go it alone" nor submissively comply with a presidential military policy they think is substantially wrong or professionally unsound. Military chiefs of this sort understand the critical distinction between their legal-administrative obligation to respect the Commander-in-Chief's authority, and their moral-professional obligation not to revere it. (27:174)

Clearly the tragedy of this critical period of the Korean War understandably lie in the disinclination, perhaps unwillingness of the principal military advisers to the national command authority to formulate more precise directives and enforce their proper execution in the face of MacArthur's unhesitating, unalterable, and dramatic bent for carrying out the letter rather than the spirit of the guidance he received. In essence, the entire initial six month phase of the war was representative of a war's prosecution with directed campaign outcomes falling short of total victory, as well as an action-reaction cycle with MacArthur largely providing the stimulus. As a result, national military strategy was gradually shaped and molded by a series of isolated, nevertheless, related incremental responses to a rapidly changing military situation riddled with uncertainties and ambiguities.

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